



Learning for Sustainability Scotland Annual Report

January - December 2024



At the LfS Scotland 10th Birthday celebrations in the Playfair Library, University of Edinburgh, January 2024

1. BACKGROUND

Scotland has a long-standing commitment to Learning for Sustainability (Lfs) involving all aspects of learning: formal (e.g. schools, colleges, universities), non-formal (e.g. youth, adult, community, business) and informal (e.g. home, leisure).

The UN's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-14) catalysed activity in all sectors through two Action Plans¹ co-ordinated by the Scottish Government. As the Decade came to its end, the Lfs community in Scotland considered that the establishment of a Scotland-wide United Nations University-recognised Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was the most appropriate way to continue the work of promoting and supporting the concept and practice of Lfs in Scotland. The United Nations University (UNU) unconditionally accepted the proposal to create Scotland's RCE in December 2012 and the first AGM of Scotland's UNU-recognised RCE, '**Learning for Sustainability Scotland**' ('Lfs Scotland'), was held on October 22nd 2013. Last year we thus celebrated 10 years of action by Lfs Scotland.

Since its launch, Learning for Sustainability Scotland has been very active in Scotland, the UK and globally. In 2015, Scotland was one of the first nations to commit to the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030 and Lfs Scotland has been an active contributor to the UNESCO [ESD for 2030 programme](#); particularly through its work to support the UNU-IAS '[Roadmap for the RCE Community 2021–2030](#)'.

More information on projects and partnerships can be found on the Learning for Sustainability Scotland website (www.learningforsustainabilityscotland.org) and in past Annual Reports. This report details activities in 2024.

2. GOVERNANCE

The Learning for Sustainability Scotland Steering Group represents our members: providing strategic advice and direction to support our Vision, Mission and Objectives. Their roles and responsibilities are set out in the [Lfs Scotland Strategic Plan 2020-25](#).

Our eight Steering Group members, elected in January 2023, were:

- Alan Bainbridge (Queen Margaret University)
- Eirini Gallou (University of Strathclyde)
- Fiona Craig (Scottish Qualifications Authority)
- Jim Milton (Webster's High School)
- Laura Curtis-Moss (2050 Climate Group to August 2024, then RSPB Scotland)
- Rebecca Petford (Greener Kirkcaldy)
- Rehema White (University of St Andrews)
- Sara Smith (Royal Highland Education Trust)

¹ Scottish Government (2006) *Learning for Our Future: Scotland's First Action Plan for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* and (2010), *Learning for Change: Scotland's Second Action Plan for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development*.

Rehema White was re-elected as Steering Group Chair in March 2023, and Laura Curtis-Moss as Vice-Chair. Kathrin Mobius (EAUC Scotland) continued to be co-opted to the Steering Group to provide Tertiary Sector expertise.

There are currently three 'Action Groups' with the following representation on the Steering Group during this period:

- Further and Higher Education: Rehema White (University of St Andrews)
- Community and Sustainable Development Goals: Rehema White
- Heritage: Ullrich Kockel (University of the Highlands and Islands).

Laura Curtis-Moss retired from the role of Scotland's RCE Youth Coordinator in March 2024. Her appointed successor is Alyson MacKay (2050 Climate Group).

Professor Pete Higgins, University of Edinburgh was Director of LfS Scotland until retiring from this role at the Steering Group meeting in June 2024, and was succeeded by Dr Beth Christie, University of Edinburgh. An Executive Group comprising the Director, Chair and the Secretariat has met on a number of occasions to facilitate planning and action. Over this period, the Steering Group and Secretariat continued work based on the [Strategic Plan](#) for LfS Scotland for the period from 2020-2025 and work plan for 2023-24 and developed a Strategic Plan for 2025-30; set in the context of the [UNU-IAS Roadmap for the RCE Community 2021-30](#). The Steering Group also reviewed fundraising activities, supported Action and Task Group activities, led on and contributed to various policy consultations, engaged formally and informally with Scottish Government, and contributed to national and global fora as detailed below.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Learning for Sustainability Scotland has 1,034 members based in Scotland, and a total of 1,212 bulletin subscribers (December 2024); comprising a blend of individuals, groups and organisations.

4. EMPLOYEES

During this period, Betsy King was employed as Development Manager (0.6 FTE), Jenny Haggarty as Administration and Finance Officer (0.7 FTE), and Kirsten Leask as Project Manager (1.0 FTE). Project consultants engaged by LfS Scotland were Sophie Coats, Angela Farnish and Katie Grant.

5. RESOURCES

The University of Edinburgh has generously hosted LfS Scotland and provided administrative support as an in-kind contribution since its inception. This has included the provision of office accommodation for LfS Scotland staff within the Moray House School of Education and Sport campus, and full servicing for the Centre; including payroll, HR, telephone and internet, IT support and the use of University meeting spaces. LfS Scotland operates under the University of Edinburgh's charitable status.

Other than this University of Edinburgh resource and support from grants for specific projects, LfS Scotland is self-funding. It has no recurrent direct grant for core activities from the Scottish Government or any other source, but continues to be free for members to join and receive the benefits of this membership. There is no core funding to support staffing, although currently salaries are underwritten by Moray House School of Education and Sport, which offers longer term planning continuity. We deliver the core work of LfS Scotland

through full economic costing in some projects, University of Edinburgh resources, and more general support from the Steering Group and other members.

During 2024, LfS Scotland’s activities were supported through grant and fee-earning from projects (Education Scotland’s STEM CLPL Grant, British Council, UKRI (2024-26), University of Edinburgh, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund via YouthLink Scotland). The LfS Scotland team and members of the Steering Group continue to develop additional proposals for longer-term funding.

6. ACTIVITIES

Our pan-sectoral activities in 2024 were developed in response to findings from the 2024 Members Survey with strategic inputs from the Steering Group..

6.1 MAILING LIST AND BULLETIN

A [monthly e-bulletin](#) containing an update on LfS Scotland activities and highlighting information on events, courses, resources, policy and funding news, the latest job vacancies and the work of different organisations in the field of Learning for Sustainability, was compiled by Editor Katie Grant and distributed to members. Since March 2022, a quarterly [Policy and Research e-bulletin](#) has also been compiled for members.

6.2 WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

We continue to update [our website](#) in line with comments and suggestions from members. Our online presence is further complemented by use of several social media platforms. Our [X](#) (formerly known as [Twitter](#)) [presence](#) was maintained in 2024, with 7,508 followers (December 2024). In addition, a Learning for Sustainability Scotland Bluesky site was established in December 2024. The [LinkedIn site](#) now has 1,486 followers (Dec 2024), on Facebook we have 735 followers, and our Instagram account, established in 2023, now has 115 followers.

6.3 PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS

Following consultation with members, most events and workshops organised by ourselves and others continued to take place online. During 2024, presentations and workshops were organised by, or delivered on behalf of LfS Scotland at the following conferences, webinars and seminars:

2024	Event	Presentation(s) by LfS Scotland	Event organized by LfS Scotland (many in partnership)
January	Learning for Sustainability in Scotland’s Schools (UoE PGDE)	X	
January	LfS Scotland AGM and annual gathering	X	X
January	LfS Scotland evening 10 th anniversary reception	X	X
January	Celebrating the Global Impact of Short Online Courses (with UoE digital team)	X	
January	Outdoor Learning Across the Curriculum: Theory and Guidelines for Practice: Book launch	X	
January	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: Supporting LfS across the everyday for all (with GTC Scotland)	X	X
January	Learning for Sustainability and Initial Teacher Education (with GTC Scotland and SCDE LfS Group)	X	
January	Reflecting on LfS Communities of practice (UoE Teaching Climate and Sustainability: Community of Practice)	X	X

February	Responding to the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill consultation, webinar	X	X
February	Introducing European RCE Connect webinars	x	x
February	Learning for Sustainability and STEM	X	X
February	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: Sharing and celebrating LfS journeys (with GTC Scotland)	X	
March	European RCE Connect webinar (SDG212 Sustainable Consumption and Eco design (with RCE Czechia)	X	
March	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: Enabling an Enquiring Ethos (with GTC Scotland)	X	X
March	Learning for Sustainability and Initial Teacher Education – (with GTC Scotland and SCDE LfS Group)	X	
March	Monitoring ESD in Colleges - EAUC Scotland Topic Support Network in Education for Sustainable Development / LfSS Action Group in FE/HE	X	X
March	Good Food Nation consultation webinar	X	X
April	European RCE Connect webinar (Multi-level education through a hackathon (with RCE Fryslan)	X	
April	TQFE and Sustainability round table webinar (with EAUC Scotland)	X	
April	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: Responding to the LfS Call to Action in Secondary settings (with GTC Scotland)	X	
May	ESD TSN: Sustainability Competencies, Skills, and Graduate Attributes: EAUC Scotland Topic Support Network in Education for Sustainable Development / LfSS Action Group in FE/HE	X	X
May	European RCE Connect webinar (The Belarusian ESD community (with RCE Belarus))	X	X
May	‘Telling your Story’ webinar (with RHET and SCCAN)	X	X
May	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: Coaching and Mentoring for LfS (with GTC Scotland)	X	X
May	Outdoor Nature-based learning (UoE Teaching Climate and Sustainability: Community of Practice)	X	
May	Scotland’s SDG Network online webinar	X	
June	European RCE Connect webinar (Research collaboration in the RCE network (with RCE Hamburg))	X	X
June	Learning for Sustainability and Initial Teacher Education – (with GTC Scotland and SCDE LfS Group)	X	X

June	'Learning for a better World: an introduction to LfS and Youthwork (with YouthLink Scotland)	X	X
June	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: The LfS Book Club (with GTC Scotland)	X	
July	The Earth Charter: Spiritual, Social, and Policy Perspectives (with the Edinburgh International Centre for Spirituality and Peace)	X	
August	How can assessment for, as and of learning support sustainability? (UoE Teaching Climate and Sustainability: Community of Practice Summer Forum)	X	
August	Education (Scotland) Bill consultation webinar	X	X
August	European RCE conference presentations, Dinslaken		
September	Post-school consultation webinar	X	X
September	European RCE Connect webinar (Reflecting on the outcomes of the European RCE meeting (with RCE Ruhr))	X	
September	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: Whole setting approaches to LfS (with GTC Scotland)	X	X
October	Challenging Conversations webinar (with Youthlink Scotland and Scotdec)	X	X
October	Learning for Sustainability PGDE lecture	X	
October	European RCE Connect webinar (Strategic Working Groups, with group facilitators)	X	X
October	Education for Sustainable Development in Practice: tips from educators' (with Earth Charter International)	X	
October	Schools' Climate Negotiation Simulation (with British Council and University of Edinburgh)	X	X
November	Climate Justice (UoE Teaching Climate and Sustainability: Community of Practice)	X	X
November	Harnessing the Power of Partnerships In LfS	X	
November	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: LfS and Initial Teacher Education with GTC Scotland)	X	X
November	Scottish International Development Alliance SDG Roadshow at University of St Andrews	X	
December	Learning for Unsustainability? Beth Christie, keynote address at 2024 TEESNet conference, Liverpool Hope University	X	
December	Learning for Sustainability and GTCS Professional Standards: LfS and the role of local authorities (with GTC Scotland)	X	X
December	European RCEs 2023-24 (at 17th Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs meeting)	X	
December	European RCE Connect webinar (Covid's impact on ESD (with RCE Bretagne))	X	X

6.4 WORKSHOPS, WEBINARS and EVENTS

The following offers more detail on some of the workshops, webinars and events organized during the year to give a flavour of the range of activities undertaken.

6.4.1 AGM and evening reception January 2024

Our 2023 AGM, held on 11 January 2024, was an in-person celebration of the tenth year of LfS Scotland. 60 of our members joined us for an interactive reflection on a '[Decade of Learning for Sustainability in Scotland](#)', and to share their thoughts and ideas on priorities for the next decade and beyond.

A variety of different perspectives and provocations set the scene. Evie Murray, from [Earth in Common](#) in Leith provided an overview of the way in which her organisation has enabled the local community to engage in LfS-related activity, and Jennifer Hutton, teacher at [Dunblane Primary School](#) in Stirlingshire, shared the journey of her school towards a whole-setting approach to Learning for Sustainability. George Tarvit from the [Sustainable Scotland Network](#) provided a 'public bodies' perspective on sustainability; whilst Greg Mannion from [University of Stirling](#) shared more about the way in which further and higher education institutions are increasingly weaving Learning for Sustainability across their everyday activities. Ian Menzies from [Education Scotland](#) provided input on the Scottish and international policy landscapes that influence Learning for Sustainability, and Rob Bushby from [Awards Plus](#) provided insights and ideas into a pan-sectoral approach to Learning for Sustainability.

Futures thinking skill-sharing workshops were: **Artificial Intelligence and its implications for Learning for Sustainability, with Jen Ross, University of Edinburgh; Impact Assessment, with Sara Smith, Royal Highland Educational Trust) and Meaningful engagement with young people and youth voice, with Sophia Georgescu, Children's Parliament).**

'Looking to the Future the next decade and beyond' was led by Joe Janetta, Raphael Uddin, and Rosie Zisman; senior students from Boroughmuir High School in Edinburgh, and their maths teacher, Tom Bird, who shared their vision of what school-based learning should look like to enable a sustainable future.

The [joyful evening reception](#) welcomed 80 guests from across Scotland's educational landscape. Held in the University of Edinburgh's Playfair Library, the event featured a keynote address by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Jenny Gilruth MSP, who hailed the contribution of Learning for Sustainability Scotland in its pan-sectoral approach to advancing the skills, knowledge, and values needed for a more sustainable and equitable world. There were also contributions from Peter Mathieson, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh; Bernard Combes, Programme Specialist for ESD for 2030, UNESCO; Jonghwi Park, Academic Programme Officer, United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies; our Chair Rehema White; and young people from Boroughmuir High School, City of Edinburgh.

6.4.2 Harnessing the Power of Partnerships for Learning for Sustainability

In December 2024, in the context of [Scottish education reform](#) and the Scottish Government's Learning for Sustainability action plan: [Target 2030: A movement for people, planet and prosperity](#), LfS Scotland and [YouthLink Scotland](#), the national agency for youth work, welcomed more than 40 change-makers to an in-person creative round-table event, centred around the question '*How can we harness partnership approaches to Learning for Sustainability to support Scotland's aspirations around education reform and the Scottish Attainment Challenge?*

Chaired by Joan MacKay, Head of Curriculum Innovation at Education Scotland, context setting insights were followed by stimulating examples of successful partnership working to benefit young people from: YouthLink

Scotland-led '[Natural Leaders](#)' programme; Stirling Council's '[Climate Leaders](#)' initiative; and [The Green Team](#), Edinburgh.

An action-oriented report, identifying how to establish, sustain and growing effective Learning for Sustainability focused partnerships and bring other relevant partners into these conversations, will be published in early 2025. This work was funded through the Natural Leaders programme, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Foundation Scotland, The Gannochy Trust and The David Doig Foundation.

6.4.3 Youth work and Learning for Sustainability

YouthLink Scotland and LfS Scotland continued our jointly-hosted series of webinars; exploring the role of Learning for Sustainability in youth work settings to support the connections with the aspirations of both the national Learning for Sustainability Action Plan and National Youthwork Outcomes.

The introduction to LfS in Youthwork webinar, held in June, explored what is meant by 'Learning for Sustainability' and the benefits and opportunities for young people and practitioners in non-formal education. Inspirational examples of practice shared were the Helping Young People Engage (HYPE) programme in West Lothian Council, and YouthLink Scotland's Natural Leaders programme. Julie Beckett, from the Community Learning and Development team at Education Scotland, updated on the many resources available to support practitioners.

Young people are constantly faced with making decisions about a wide range of controversial issues that provoke strong, varied and often contradictory responses. In October, youth workers from across Scotland engaged with our participative online workshop focused on [Challenging Conversations: supporting young people in engaging with controversial equity and sustainability issues](#). Speakers from YouthLink and ScotDEC facilitated discussions about how to confidently create opportunities for young people to engage appropriately and confidently with these complex issues. The session provided an opportunity to share perspectives on how to have difficult conversations and also to critically engage with the many sources of information that inform thinking and ideas about them.

6.4.4 Telling your Story: monitoring and evaluating the impact of your Learning for Sustainability activities

In an online event in June, organised and delivered in partnership with colleagues from the Royal Highland Education Trust and the Scottish Communities Climate Action Network, participants considered how we can develop effective approaches to monitoring and evaluating the impact of LfS activities through the use of storytelling. The power of storytelling to collect information (indicators) about the changes or differences (outcomes) that Learning for Sustainability activities make and to express them, was explored using inspirational examples, which led to participants sharing their own stories.

6.5 YOUTH COORDINATORS

6.5.1 In 2017, the Global RCE Network asked all RCEs to nominate a Youth Coordinator to help engage "youth" with the RCE network. In this context, "youth" is defined as being anyone under the age of 35 or working with those under 35. Through this, we aim is to increase Learning for Sustainability Scotland's engagement with students and young professionals with an interest in teaching and learning about sustainability, through development of a Youth Network.

6.5.2 Regular contact was maintained with Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS)-UK, sparqs and EAUC Scotland to ensure co-ordinated support for students' sustainability action in Scotland.

6.6 COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

6.6.1 Learning for Sustainability in Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

LfS Scotland (Beth Christie, Betsy King and Kirsten Leask), collaborated with colleagues from the University of Stirling (Prof Lizzie Rushton, University of Stirling and Scottish Council of Deans of Education (SCDE) lead for LfS), GTC Scotland (Suzy Aldous) and University of Glasgow (Dr Claire Ramjan) to facilitate a national working group aiming to 'create a single national approach to support LfS within Initial Teacher Education' ([LfS Action Plan 24](#)). In 2024, more than thirty representatives from the eleven Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Scotland who have ITE portfolios, have met for collaborative meetings online and in person to reflect on the current status of LfS in ITE, articulate a shared vision and understanding, and co--create a draft framework of guiding principles for LfS in ITE. The resulting draft has been widely shared for comment and will be published in early 2025. Further activities associated with dissemination and implementation are anticipated in 2025.

6.6.2 Learning for a Sustainable Future Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

LfS Scotland, in partnership with The University of Edinburgh, and funded by the University and The British Council, developed and facilitated three 'massive open online courses' in 2024. The five-week [Learning for a Sustainable Future](#) course, led by LfS Scotland Director Dr Beth Christie, focused on personal reflection, local and global contexts, online community building, and action within individual 'spheres of influence'. This facilitated course was offered in March 2024 and October 2024 on Coursera. Together they have attracted over 14,240 participants from across the globe. The course will be offered again in Spring 2025 on Coursera.

Following on from this course, [Learning for a Sustainable Future: Live at COP 29](#) offered participants from all over the world an opportunity to examine what the UN Climate Change Conference in Baku, Azerbaijan was, why it was important, and consider how to support the co-ordinated aims and ambitions of the Conference through action. 'Live' insights into COP29 included those from Won Jung Byun, Team Leader, Greening Education Partnership, UNESCO; Ian Menzies, Learning for Sustainability lead, Education Scotland; Monomita Nag-Chowdhury, Climate Connections lead, British Council; Dorothy Kazombo Mwale, Green Girls Platform, Malawi; Quinn Runkle, Director of Education, SOS-UK; and Marie-Claire Graf, Climate Youth Negotiator Academy. More than 4,500 participants took part in the course over the two weeks of the conference and the material will be available as a legacy resource until COP30 in November 2025.

6.6.3 COP29 Climate Simulation Negotiation

In advance of the UN Climate Conference COP29 held in Baku Azerbaijan, Learning for Sustainability Scotland, in partnership with the University of Edinburgh and the British Council, welcomed more than 90 students from 13 secondary schools across the City of Edinburgh, West Lothian, Scottish Borders, and East Ayrshire to take part in the [British Council's COP29 Climate Simulation Negotiation event](#). Role-playing as politicians, journalists, and lobbyists, students had the opportunity to find out what it's really like to negotiate a climate deal.

Delegates heard from Acting Cabinet Secretary for Energy and Net Zero, Gillian Martin MSP, and were supported in negotiations by Prof Pete Higgins, formerly Director of LfS Scotland, and Jennifer Salmon, Earth Fellow at the Edinburgh Earth Initiative. By the end of the debate, pupils collectively agreed to keep global

warming under 1.9°C; just over the target, but made headway with strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support nations, and develop adaptation measures to protect planet and people.

This was the second time the event had come to Scotland and was the first in a series of similar events coordinated by the British Council in four cities across the UK and in Baku. The event was featured on Forth Radio and video footage and interviews with students, teaching staff and organisers were incorporated into the November COP29 MOOC (see 6.6.2)

6.6.4 GTC Scotland Learning for Sustainability Hub

During 2024, LfS Scotland continued to work with GTCS Scotland to develop an ongoing national [Learning for Sustainability Hub](#), based on the GTC Scotland website, to catalyse the engagement of teachers in early years, primary, secondary, ASN and college settings with LfS in the GTCS Professional Standards at every stage of their careers.

The Hub aims to be an open, interactive, user-friendly ‘one-stop-shop’ that inspires teachers to ‘Explore, Engage, Enact and Embed and Connect’ with LfS as a key aspect of what it means to be a teacher in Scotland. During the year, successful ‘live’ monthly ‘Connect’ sessions were organised with inputs from inspirational professionals; complemented by an interactive map-based platform for practitioners to share their practice and interact with one another on an ongoing basis. Developments are supported by a cross-sectoral practitioner focus group ([LfS Action Plan 21](#))

6.6.5 STEM and LfS professional learning

In partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Council and North Ayrshire Council, LfS Scotland developed and successfully delivered a *‘Bringing the STEM Curriculum to Life: Learning for a Sustainable World’* four-module course for 60 educators from October 2022-February 2023. This course was funded by Education Scotland and Scottish Government to support the STEM Education and Training Strategy. In Phase 2, the course was offered to educators from across the 9 local authorities in the South East and South West Education Improvement Collaboratives. This professional learning, which ran from October 2023 - February 2024, aimed to support teachers and early years practitioners to weave together STEM, Learning for Sustainability and Developing the Young Workforce activity across their practice and the wider life of their learning communities.

6.6.6 Feeling the untouchable: Haptic touch experiences for naturalistic learning

LfS Scotland is a partner in an exciting new two-year initiative that will bring together teachers, students and researchers to engage with sustainability challenges by co-creating tactile discovery experiences of the natural world. The project is led by The Open University with partners University of Edinburgh, Imperial College London, LfS Scotland and Sight Scotland, and funded October 2024-2026 by UK Research and Innovation. LfS Scotland will support the facilitation of workshops with schools in Scotland and the dissemination of project results.

6.7 POLICY ENGAGEMENT

LfS Scotland’s Secretariat maintained formal and informal dialogue with a wide range of individuals from Scottish Government (members and officials) and its agencies during the year.

During 2024, LfS Scotland responded to consultations through its Secretariat, Action Groups, and Steering Group members. Responses were submitted on behalf of members to:

- February 2024: Scottish Government (National Performance Framework Unit) **Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill**
- March 2024: **Independent Review of Community Learning and Development**: Call for Evidence – Practitioners
- March: 2024 General Teaching Council for Scotland Review of the **Memorandum for Entry into Programmes of Initial Teacher Education in Scotland**
- April 2024: Scottish Government, **National Good Food Nation Plan**
- April 2024: Scottish Government Draft guidance and general determination for **Teacher Qualification in Further Education (TQFE)**
- May 2024: **QAA Quality Code**
- August 2024: Scottish Parliament Education, Children and Young People Committee: **Education (Scotland) Bill** - Detailed call for views
- September 2024: **Post-School Education and Skills Reform**: Consultation on legislation

An online event was held in February, with colleagues from Scottish Government, to explore and shape the response from LfS Scotland to the consultation on the proposed [Wellbeing and Sustainable Development \(Scotland\) Bill](#). The proposed Bill, which is not currently (December 2024) in the 2024-25 'Programme for Government', aims to ensure that Scotland's National Outcomes, sustainable development and wellbeing are thought about in public sector decision making.

In March, LfS Scotland collaborated with Nourish Scotland to provide an online opportunity for members and other participants to hear more about and to share their views on [the Scotland's Food Nation consultation](#). This Plan aims to progress food system transformation in Scotland, working collectively with people, communities, businesses, agencies and organisations. Members contributed views on the targets, indicators and what life should look like in a 'Good Food Nation', contributing to LfS Scotland's response to the consultation.

In September, LfS Scotland collaborated with EAUC Scotland to host an event where members could hear more about and share their views on the Scottish Government's [Post-school education and skills reform legislation](#). These proposals support changes in what public bodies (Scottish Funding Council, Skills Development Scotland and the Student Awards Agency Scotland) do in the post-school system in order to simplify responsibilities for apprenticeships and student support. Participant contributions were used to submit responses from EAUC Scotland and LfS Scotland, and to support others to submit their own responses.

Following the national '[Call to Action' in December 2023](#), LfS Scotland continued to participate in the Scottish Government's Learning for Sustainability Leadership Group; responsible for overseeing the development, delivery and implementation of the Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023-2030 [Target 2030: A movement for people, planet and prosperity](#). The aim is 'to build an inspiring movement for change so every 3 to 18 place of education becomes a sustainable learning setting by 2030'. Members of LfS Scotland's Secretariat and Steering Group contributed to ongoing workshops to progress the proposed 'Learning for Sustainability Indicators' ([LfS Action Plan 7a](#)).

Following the announcement in March 2024 that Education Scotland had been asked to lead on a systemic approach to review of Scotland’s 3-18yrs curriculum; “the totality of all that is planned for children and young people throughout their education” the [Curriculum Improvement Cycle](#) design and implementation is now underway. LfS Scotland Secretariat and Steering Group members are participating in ongoing workshops to contribute to the development of Core Competencies, and redesign of Curriculum areas, to realise the learner entitlement to Learning for Sustainability.

LfS Scotland continues to participate in [Scotland’s Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) Network](#) development through LfS Scotland’s Chair, Rehema White. This coalition on sustainable development is open to all.

6.8 INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING

LfS Scotland is Scotland’s United Nations University-recognised Regional Centre of Expertise in ESD, and one of the global network of 197 RCEs across 53 countries (December 2023). Betsy King was re-appointed by the Global RCE Centre in UNU-IAS as the RCE Regional Advisor for Europe 2023-2025, to advise RCEs in the region and to review new RCE applications.

During 2024, there was regular contact with the Global RCE Network and European RCEs. We carried out the following international knowledge exchange activities:

6.8.1 European RCEs.

LfS Scotland provided support for the 2024 annual meeting of Regional Centres of Expertise in Europe hosted by RCE Ruhr at their base in Hof Emschermündung on the outskirts of Dinslaken, and online. Through presentations of current activity and open-space, small-group discussions, we shared progress in Scotland and explored the possibilities for future joint projects and potential partnerships with organisations such as UNESCO and the European Commission.

Actions from this meeting are being taken forward through five Strategic Working Groups: Strategic Partnerships; Communications; Events; Research and Funding; and Youth. Activities undertaken by each Group are reported at monthly online RCE European ‘Connect’ sessions initiated in 2024. Kirsten Leask was appointed as co-Communicator (with Detlev Lindau Bank, RCE Oldenburger Münsterland) for the European RCEs, and in 2024 LfS Scotland supported eight ‘Connect’ sessions and the ongoing development and activity of the Events and Communications Strategic Working Groups.

6.8.2 19th Meeting - Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs

As RCE Regional Advisor for Europe, Betsy King participated in the meetings of the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the global RCE network in June and December 2024. Agenda items included consideration of applications from prospective new RCEs, review of RCE Award nominations, Appointment of Youth Coordinators, Planning the 2025 Global RCE conference to celebrate 20 years of RCEs, and strategic planning for future global RCE development in the context of the UNESCO ESD for 2030 Roadmap.

6.8.3 Greening Education Partnership

During 2024, LfS Scotland participated as a stakeholder in the UNESCO Greening Education Partnership; ‘a global initiative that takes a whole-of-system approach to support countries to tackle the climate crisis by

harnessing the critical role of education'. The Partnership was one of the six 'Calls to Action' launched at the UN Transforming Education Summit in 2022, and is a growing community of practice comprised of 95 Member States (including the UK) and over 1,400 organizations (including LfS Scotland) (Nov. 2024).

6.8.4 International Climate Conference COP29 November 2024

The Learning for a Sustainable Future: Live at COP29 MOOC (see 6.6.2) provided an opportunity to highlight Scotland's focus on Learning for Sustainability; with contributions from Ian Menzies, Learning for Sustainability lead at Education Scotland as well as footage and insights from Scotland's secondary schools Climate Negotiations event (see 6.6.3). Inputs from RCEs, global organisations such as UNESCO, as well as University of Edinburgh delegates, were featured. COP29 featured a high-level Ministerial Roundtable on 'greening education' and enhancing climate literacy metrics; with the OECD and the COP29 Presidency aiming to develop climate-focused test items across PISA (the Programme for International Student Assessment) domains, and create accessible resources for educators for PISA in 2029. The [Baku Initiative on Human Development for Climate Resilience](#) was endorsed, which also aims to catalyse global investment in education, skills, health, and well-being, in particular for children and youth.

6.9 PARTNERSHIPS

In line with the partnership focus of the SDGs and our status as a network organisation with many active members, we continue to seek to strengthen our partnership working. We organised and ran events in partnership, and have developed stronger links with other organisations nationally and internationally.

Examples include working with:

- Tertiary education sector leading organisations; such as GTC Scotland, EAUC Scotland, Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs), and the College Development Network;
- NGOs supporting education or other aspects of sustainability; such as the National Network of Outdoor Learning, Cairngorms National Park Authority, SSERC, Nourish Scotland, International Development Education Association for Scotland, and YouthLink Scotland;
- Schools and teacher education organisations such as Education Scotland, GTC Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework, Educational Institute for Scotland and several local authorities;
- UK-level groups and organisations such as The British Council, TEESNet, SOS-UK and the Our Shared World coalition;
- International partners such as UNESCO ESD-Net and our European RCE partners;
- University of Edinburgh's international programmes;
- Community groups and organisations such as Greener Kirkcaldy, Scottish Communities Climate Action Network, and Earth in Common;
- National and local government departments and organisations such as Sustainable Scotland Network, and the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework team.

6.10 ACTION GROUPS

Action Groups are designed to enable members to work individually or together to carry out specific pieces of work or projects that relate to the Vision, Mission and Objectives of LfS Scotland. These include:

- **Task Groups:** Member-led groups with a focus on specific time-bound tasks with defined purposes, outputs and resources required.
- **Interest Groups:** Member-led, topic or sector-focused groups with defined purposes, but without defined outputs or resources required.
- **Operational Groups:** Ongoing internal Secretariat and Steering Group-led groups.

6.10.1 Curating Heritage for Sustainable Communities Task Group (Convenor: Ullrich Kockel)

The primary objective of the group is to develop a framework for sustainable heritage-based activity; especially in vulnerable ecological settings. Previous activity has included an appraisal of the maritime heritage of the Northern Isles as a cultural resource for sustainable community development, and care for that resource. Members included Shetland Museums & Archives, Orkney Museum, Heriot-Watt University and various community groups. The project was very successful and opened up new perspectives on sustainable development of community co-curated heritage. This has involved a “New Connections across the Northern Isles” exhibition in Orkney and Shetland and a Virtual Museum.

New collaborations with colleagues from University of Western Ontario, Canada and representatives of indigenous/traditional communities in Turtle Island, Scotland and New Zealand are also being explored and will be taken forward in 2025.

6.10.2 Further and Higher Education Interest Group (Convenors: Christine Calder, Scott Strachan, Rehema White)

This is an ongoing networking group co-badged as one of EAUC’s Topic Support Networks to explore and share best practice in learning for sustainability within further and higher education settings, curricula and research practices; and develop resources to support teaching and research staff to embed sustainability in their practice. Further and Higher Education groups plan both separate and joint meetings; attended by representatives from universities and colleges around Scotland, depending on the focus of the meeting.

Two online events were held in 2024.

6.10.3 Community and SDGs Interest Group (Convenors: Rehema White and Laura Curtis-Moss)

Efforts in this area have focused primarily on contributions to the formal establishment of Scotland’s SDG Network. Since the loss of funding for a coordinator, the SDG Network has continued with a reduced Steering Group and intern support to map projects in Scotland and facilitate collaboration. Changes in personnel continued to delay progress of the Network in 2024. The SDG Network ran an online event to facilitate sharing of experiences and resources, with input from Learning for Sustainability Scotland. The Sustainable Futures Group of the University of St Andrews hosted a SDG Roadshow by Scotland’s International Development Alliance in November. Collaboration with Global Ecovillage Network continued, with a joint funding proposal submitted in December.

6.10.2 LfS Scotland Operational Groups

In 2024, the Communications, Monitoring and Evaluation and Policy Operational Groups held regular action-orientated meetings involving Steering Group and Secretariat members. These will be further developed in 2025.

6.11 CONSULTANCY ACTIVITIES

Members of the LfS Scotland Secretariat and associates carried out the following consultancy activities, in order to support the wider core work of LfS Scotland.

6.11.1 LfS Scotland (Kirsten Leask, Betsy King, Jenny Haggarty) was engaged by University of Edinburgh to deliver an 8-week long (April/June 2024) [Sustainability and Social Responsibility International Foundation Programme](#) for 40 international students. This programme will be delivered again in 2025.

6.11.2 LfS Scotland (Betsy King, Kirsten Leask) was commissioned by the British Council in February 2024 to provide a report on the policies of the education departments of the four nations of the UK in relation to climate change and sustainability education and the extent to which these policies have translated into practice in the classroom.

6.12 PUBLICATIONS

We have produced various resources and papers to support our activities and facilitate our members' activities over the year. These include:

- Higgins, P 2024 Nature's classroom: Tackling the climate and nature crises through Scottish schools, ReSource, Spring 2024 <https://rse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/ReSource-Spring-2024.pdf>
- Beames, S., Higgins, P., Nicol, R. & Smith, H., (2023) [Outdoor Learning Across the Curriculum: Theory and Guidelines for Practice](#) Routledge

6.13 REPRESENTATION ON NATIONAL and INTERNATIONAL GROUPS

Secretariat or Steering Group members represented LfS Scotland on the following groups:

- **Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs** as Regional Adviser to the RCE Community (Europe) (from January 2020)
- **Scottish Government Learning for Sustainability Leadership Group** member (2022 – ongoing)
- **Scottish Government Learning for Sustainability Policy and Stakeholder Network** member (June 2019 - ongoing)
- **Scottish Council of Deans of Education LfS in Initial Teacher Education Working Group** (February 2024 – ongoing)
- **Scotland SDG Network** Steering Group member (December 2020 - ongoing)
- **Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan (CESAP) Education Sub Group** member (September 2022 to June 2024)
- **SCQF Credit Rating Project Steering Group** member (April 2022 and ongoing)
- **Teacher Education for Equity and Environmental Sustainability Network (TEESNet)** Steering Group member and Scotland representative
- **GTC Scotland ITE Working Group** (January 2023 – ongoing)
- **Education Scotland LfS Partner Forum** (member from June 2021)
- **Education Scotland Rights and Participation Network** (member from 2022)
- **College Development Network Awards** Judge (August 2024)
- **Green Gown Awards** Judge (2024)
- **National Network of Outdoor Learning** member (November 2019 and ongoing)
- **Blue-Action Societal engagement group** member (2019 and ongoing)
- **China Nature Education Network** Prof Pete Higgins - expert adviser (2019- ongoing)
- **Scottish Government** - Scottish Biodiversity Programme Stakeholder Engagement Group (Prof Pete Higgins - member September 2020 and ongoing)
- **St Andrews Prize for the Environment Steering Committee** (ongoing)

- **Royal Society of Edinburgh Education Committee** Prof Pete Higgins - member
- **Field Studies Council** – Prof Pete Higgins - Board Member and Chair (July 2020 - ongoing)
- **NatureScot** (Scottish Government nature agency) – Prof Pete Higgins - Board Member, Chair of Scientific Advisory Committee (June 2021 - ongoing)
- **Joint Nature Conservation Committee** (UK) - Prof Pete Higgins - Member (November 2022 - ongoing)
- **Island Schools Regional Stakeholder Group** – Panel Member (December 2022 – ongoing)
- **Local authority Learning for Sustainability network/advisory groups (Dumfries & Galloway, City of Edinburgh, Fife, West Lothian)** – members (2019/2023/2022/2020 – ongoing)
- **UNESCO Greening Education Partnership** member (2023 ongoing)
- **Proposed Outdoor Education (Scotland) Bill** - Prof Pete Higgins - member of Advisory Group (2022 - ongoing)

6.14 AWARDS

LfS Scotland and partners received award success in the [2024 Regional Centres of Expertise in Education \(RCE\) Awards for Innovative Projects on Education for Sustainable Development \(ESD\)](#). These awards are presented annually to RCEs that have made outstanding contributions to address local sustainable development challenges in their regions.

‘The Schools’ Climate Negotiation Simulation’: partnership project with the British Council and the University of Edinburgh and supporting climate action by young people, (see 6.6.3) received an ‘Outstanding Flagship Project’ award.

The ‘Bringing the STEM Curriculum to life: learning for a sustainable world’ partnership project with Education Scotland and educators based in schools in the South East and South West Education Improvement Collaboratives (see 6.6.4) received an ‘Outstanding Flagship Project’ award.

7. NEXT STEPS

The Strategic Plan for LfS Scotland in 2025-2030 has been developed in the context of the [UNESCO Plan for ESD to 2030](#) and Global [Roadmap for the RCE Community 2021-30](#) .

Priority activities are:

1. We weave connections across sectors within Scotland and with our international partners
1.1 Increase engagement in LfS in Scotland across all sectors
1.2 Share knowledge, achievements and opportunities for members
1.3 Organise and co-host events for members; within and across sectors
1.4 Coordinate task groups to address issues of concern and interest for our members

1.5 Share our learning with others across the UN RCE Network
2. We co-produce, pioneer and practise new knowledge and approaches; and curate materials and resources with and for educators, organisations and communities
2.1 Play a leading role in debating, enabling and monitoring the UN SDGs in Scotland and beyond (especially but not exclusively SDG 4.7)
2.2 Contribute to the conceptualisation as well as the practice in this field
2.3 Develop and facilitate professional development for educators
3. We advocate and provide strategic advice for effective learning for sustainability policy
3.1 Lead on and contribute to policy debates in Scotland, the UK, and internationally
3.2 Provide advice to practitioners, policy and decision makers
3.3 Lead and contribute to expert groups to address LfS issues
3.4 Work with local authorities for LfS progress across Scotland
4. We lead, monitor, and evaluate projects and programmes locally and internationally; often in partnership
4.1 Pursue the implementation of LfS in the school sector, including teacher education at all stages
4.2 Support learning in communities and the Third Sector
4.3 Engage with the Further Education and Higher Education sectors to integrate and embed LfS
4.4 Undertake consultancy projects to progress LfS

8. MEMBERS' VOICES

We seek to inspire and inform members, to connect members and to work in partnership with members. We are driven by external policy and highlighted imperatives for LfS but we wish to respond to members' needs. We are always willing to hear new ideas or requests for Action Groups, communication, or events.

Please get in touch if you have any suggestions or if you wish to partner on a new venture.

In December 2023, we launched a [Members' Survey](#) to seek views on LfS Scotland's activities, and key findings have been used to inform our 2024/25 Work Plan.

9. FINAL WORD

This is an exciting time for Learning for Sustainability Scotland. The next year holds significant global and local challenges, as we consider how AI will influence education, as we tackle the climate and nature crises head on, as we navigate shifting political and cultural contexts. However, with the strength and commitment of our members, we feel equipped to continue to make a positive difference. After over 10 years of experience supporting education and learning for a better world, we are looking forward to the next decade. We will be sad to see members of the Secretariat and Steering Group go in 2025, but we welcome new individuals and their wisdom and perspectives. We will continue to have significant roles to play in local initiatives, in national policies such as Scotland's "Target 2030" movement for people, planet and prosperity', and in global networks such as the Regional Centres of Expertise in ESD which will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2025. We look forward to working with members and partners in the year to come.

Learning for Sustainability Scotland, December 2024

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